Almight & most merciful heavenly Father we tremble in awe as we approach thy presence. We are humbled by the realization that we can never Fully comprehend thy majesty that at best we can only know in part. In the quiet of this hour and in thy sanctuary we are aware of thy presence around us. We open our hearts to thee O Lord that we may hear thy still small voice

Forgive us O Lord for all that we have done to displease thee, For doing what we ought not do - and for leaving undone that which ought to do. In this most sacred season forgive us for Failing to love thee with a whole heart, Forgive us for failing to realize the significance of a bleeding Christ

We ask thy pardon for neglecting thy will for our lives, For not loving our neighbors as ourselves, For not witnessing to thy love in all that we do.

In a spirit of repentence, we thank thee O Lord for the assurance that we are forgiven. - For the knowledge that in the Christ we have been once again reconciled to thee.

We thank thee O Lord for thy great love, the love that created us, that sustains & encompasses us, the love that became Flesh in our savior.

For all the blessings of life we give hearty thanks O God, For the air we breathe, for the warmth that now is kindling new life in the ground all about us. For a world that sustains us and gives us life.

We thank thee for the brotherhood of all mankind, For our Families & loved ones, for neighbors & Friends - for those countless millions that we do not know - but who nevertheless are the objects of thy love.

For thy church, whose existence down through the centuries proclaims thy love

For this church, we pray that it may be true to its great task, that its light may constantly shine for thee

We ask thy blessing on those who are ill - give to them thy healing grace & peaceful presence

We ask that thou wouldst be with those who live in suffering the world over.

We ask for thy guidance for our political leaders - that they may navigate our nation over the rocky course of conflict that lies ahead

And Finally we ask for help & direction in our own lives. Help us to distinguish right from wrong - and give us the courage of our convictions. Give us the stamina to the end. Be our daily companion strengthen our wills -

Journey - to Mary identification

NO. 6 Words to the Cross

NOT ALL THE FACES AROUND THE CROSS WERE UNFRIENDLY, OUTRIGHTLY JEERING AND MOCKING: NOT EVERYPERSON WHO WAS CONNECTED WITH JESUS DEATH SCORNED AND TAUNTED HIM. THERE WAS ONE MAN, JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, WHO IF HE WAS NOT THERE THEN-SURELY LOOKED ON FROM A DISTANCE. HE WAS A MAN WHO WAS VERY MUCH INVOLVED, BUT ALSO ONE THAT THREW HIS HAT IN THE RING JUST A LITTLE TOO LATE.

JOSEPH WAS ORIGINALLY FROM A TOWN CALLED ARIMATHEA. IT'S EXACT LOCATION IS UNKNOWN BUT WE DO KNOW THAT THE PROPHET SAMUEL MADE HIS HOME THERE. APPARENTLY JOSEPH HAD LIVED IN JERUSALEM FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE FOR WE ARE TOLD THAT HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL. THE COUNCIL WAS THE SANHEDRIN, A BODY I HAVE REFERRED TO IN THE PAST AND A BODY THAT PLAYED AN INTEGRAL ROLE IN THE DRAMA OF OUR LORD'S DEATH. ROMAN RULE IN PALESTINE WAS STRICT AND COMPLETE BUT IN ORDER TO APPEASE THE TROUBLE MAKING JEWS, THEY WERE ALLOWED TO HAVE THEIR OWN RELIGIOUS HIGH COURT. THE SANHEDRIN THUSLY BECAME THE LAST VESTIGE OF HOME RULE AND INDEPENDENCE AND A POSITION ON IT WAS A HIGHLY COVETED AND COMPETITIVE AFFAIR. ONLY THE VERY WEALTHY AND MOST RESPECTED PERSON WERE TO BE FOUND AT ITS MEETINGS. JOSEPH WAS ONE OF THESE MEN. AND SO JUST BY THIS KNOWLEDGE WE KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE MAN, HIS WEALTH, POWER, AND PRESTIGE ARE OBVIOUS.

LUKE TELLS US THAT JOSEPH DID NOT CONSENT TO THE COUNCIL'S DECISION TO RECOMMEND JESUS' CRUCIFIXION: AND THAT HE WAS ALSO A MAN SEARCHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD. WE DO NOT KNOW FOR SURE WHETHER JOSEPH WAS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS OR NOT, SOME SAY HE WAS, OTHERS SAY HE WAS JUST A KIND HEARTED MAN. NEITHER OF THESE ANSWERS ARE ADEQUATE HOWEVER.

FIRSTLY, JOSEPH'S SOCIAL STATUS, HIS PRESTIGE AND ABOVE ALL ELSE HIS MEMBERSHIP IN THE SANHEDRIN WOULD HAVE PREVENTED HIM FROM BEING A DISCIPLE OF THE PEASANT FROM NARZARETH. HE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A GROUP THAT FIERCELY BELIEVED THAT WHEN THE MESSIAH CAME HE WOULD DRIVE OUT THE ROMAN OPPRESSORS AND WITH MILITARY MIGHT RESTORE ISRAEL TO A POWER AMONG THE NATIONS. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO HAVE OUTRIGHTLY PROCLAIMED JESUS AS LORD.

ON THE OTHER HAND THE PROPOSITION THAT JOSEPH WAS JUST A KIND HEARTED, COMMUNITY MINDED CITIZEN; THAT HE HAD NOTHING PERSAONALLY TO DO WITH JESUS CANNOT BE TRUE EITHER. IT WAS A RIGID UNWRITTEN LAW THAT THE FRIENDS OF A CRUCIFIED ONE SHOULD CLAIM THE BODY FOR BURIAL, BY PAYING THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT. IF THIS WAS NOT DONE THE STATE TOOK CARE OF IT IN THEIR OWN WAY. AS A MATTER OF FACT THE ROMANS USED THIS CUSTOM FREQUENTLY TO IMPLICATE OTHERS IN THE CRIMES OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE. NO DOUBT THEY WERE ANXIOUSLY

WAITING TO SEE WHO WOULD SHOW UP TO CLAIM THIS TROUBLE--MAKING RASCAL FROM NAZARETH. WOULD IT BE PETER, THE BOISTROUS FISHERMAN THAT SOME CLAIMED HAD BEEN CONSTANTLY WITH JESUS, OR JOHN, THE QUIET, INTELLIGENT ONE THAT SEEMED TO BE HIS CLOSEST FRIEND.

WE CAN IMAGINE THEIR ASTONISHMENT WHEN JOSEPH, (A MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN) CAME TO PILATE TO PURCHASE THE MUTILATED BODY.

IN THIS ACT JOSEPH MADE CLEAR BEYOND A DOUBT THAT HE WAS MORE THAN CIVIC MINDED, THAT HE WAS VERY MUCH INVOLVED WITH JESUS. NO DOUBT HE HAD HEARD THE RUMORS GOING AROUND A ABOUT THIS AMAZING PERSON AND HAD GONE TO SEE FOR HIMSELF. AS HE STOOD ON THE EDGES OF THE CROWD MAKING SURE THAT HE DIDN'T COME IN CONTACT WITH AN UNCLEAN GENTILE OR FILTHY LEPER, THE WORDS OF JESUS STRUCK HIM DEEPLY. AS A THINKING MAN JOSEPH FOUND IN THESE WORDS THE TRUTH HE HAD BEEN SEARCHING FOR. HOW SELF CONSCIOUS HE MUST HAVE BEEN, WORRYING IF SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES WOULD SEE HOW INTENTLY HE WAS LISTENING. PERHAPS IN THAT LAST WEEK HE HAD GONE TO OUR LORD, ALONE AT NIGHT, AND TALKED TO HIM ABOUT THE LAW, THE PROPHETS, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD. WHATEVER HAPPENED WE CAN BE SURE THAT JOSEPH HAD BEEN PROFOUNDLY IMPRESSED AND DEEPLY MOVED.

FOR A WEEK HE CARRIED THESE TURMOILED THOUGHTS WITH HIM AND THEN IT HAPPENED. THE SANHEDRIN WAS CALLED TOGETHER TO TRY THIS MAN JESUS AND JOSEPH HAD TO BE THERE. AS HE MUST HAVE KNOWN JESUS WAS FOUND GUILTY, [illegible]. HE WOULD

For the man he had come

HAVE BEEN TEMPTED TO SPEAK TO LOVE, BUT HIS POSITION WOULD NOT ALLOW HIM. AND SO JOSEPH MERELY REFUSED TO CONSENT TO THE VERDICT OF GUILTY.

AGAIN WE CAN IMAGINE THE PERSONAL TORTURE THIS MAN ENDURED AS HE MULLED OVER AND OVER IN HIS MIND THE UGLY FACT THAT HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL THAT HAD CONDEMNED JESUS TO DIE, AND HE HAD DONE NOTHING EXCEPT ABSTAIN. HOW HE MUST HAVE WRITHED IN AGONY AS HE WATCHED THE NAILS BEING DRIVEN. THE GUILT AND SHAME MUST HAVE BEEN OVERWHELMING AS HE SAW THE INFINITE LOVE THAT POURED FORTH FROM THE PAIN RACKED BODY.

IT WAS THEN THAT JOSEPH DECIDED TO BE A MAN, TO CAST ASIDE ALL SUPERFICIALITIES, ALL CUSTOMS AND SOCIAL TRADITIONS. IN A MAGNIFICENT ACT OF COURAGE HE WENT TO PILATE AND PURCHASED THE BODY, AND IN BELATED PRIDE BURIED IT IN HIS OWN GARDEN, IN A TOMB HE HAD HEWN OUT OF ROCK, OUTRIGHTLY INCRIMINATING HIMSELF AS AN ACCOMPLICE OF THIS CRIMINAL. JOSEPH MUST BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST GLORIOUS ACTORS IN THE STORY OF HUMAN COURAGE. HE HAD FOUND HIS MOMENT OF TRUTH AND PURSUED IT REGARDLESS OF THE COST IN PRESTIGE AND PUBLIC OPINION. AND YET IT IS A SAD STORY TOO, FOR JOSEPH WAS TOO LATE. TOO LATE TO TELL THIS MAN, THAT MEANT SO MUCH TO HIM, HOW HE FELT, TOO LATE TO BE THERE WHEN JESUS NEEDED HIM MOST. IT WAS AN HONORABLE ACT, BUT A POOR ATONEMENT FOR THE MISTAKE HE HAD MADE.

WE CAN ASSUME THAT JOSEPH LOST HIS POSITION ON THE COUNCIL AS A RESULT OF HIS ACTIONS, NO DOUBT HIS PRESTIGE, POWER AND EVEN WEALTH QUICKLY DEPARTED ALSO. HE PROBABLY BECAME A MEMBER OF THAT GROUP OF BELIEVERS WHO GATHERED SHORTLY AFTER JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION AND WHO WERE THE CORE OF THE NEW CHURCH. THIS IN ITSELF WOULD HAVE GIVEN JOSEPH JOY AND SATISFACTION BUT WE WONDER WHETHER A DAY WENT BY IN THE REMAINDER OF HIS LIFE THAT HE DID NOT WISH HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO HIS LORD WHILE HE LIVED.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA HAD TRIED TO LIVE TWO LIVES, AT BOTTOM IN THE DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL HE HAD FOUND TRUTH IN JESUS CHRIST: ON THE SURFACE, IN EVERYDAY LIFE HE WAS FORCED TO REPRESS THIS TRUTH AND LIVE A LIFE OF FALSITY: GEARED TO PUBLIC OPINION, A LIFE THAT WOULD BE FITTING FOR A MAN OF HIS SOCIAL STATUS. JOSEPH, HOWEVER, SAVED HIMSELF FROM A LIFE OF ANXIETY BY COMMITTING HIMSELF TO THE TRUTH/EVEN THOUGH A BIT BELATEDLY.

THERE IS A MESSAGE HERE THAT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO OUR GENERATION AND TO EACH ONE OF US PERSONALLY. ANALYSTS OF OUR CULTURE SAY THAT HEREIN IS THE DEEPEST PROBLEM ANOTHER DEEP PROBLEM OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION/WE HAVE NEVER LEARNED TO LIVE IN THE REALM OF ACTUALITY/WE SIMPLY ARE NOT TRUTHFUL IN OUR LIVING. WE ARE A PEOPLE THAT DO EVERYTHING FOR SHOW, ALL OUR ACTIONS ARE GEARED BY OTHER'S REACTIONS TO US. WE CANNOT SHOW HOW WE FEEL OR STATE WHAT WE THINK, "WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF ME."

without First ~~thinking~~ considering

YOU HAVE HEARD THE PHRASE "WE ARE SICK, SICK, SICK." THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT IT MEANS. WE LIVE IN THE NEVER-NEVER LAND BETWEEN WHAT WE KNOW IS RIGHT ON THE ONE HAND AND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US ON THE OTHER HAND. WE HAVE SPLIT PERSONALITIES, A CULTURE OF SCHIZOPHRENICS.

PSYCHIATRISTS OFFICES ARE FULL OF PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE WHO HAVE REACHED THE BREAKING POINT IN THIS LIFE OF TENSION. THEIR PROBLEMS VARY FROM THE IBM SALESMAN WHO HATES GRAY FLANNEL SUITS BUT MUST WEAR THEM, TO THE WEALTHY EXEC. WHO ABHORS HIS WIFE BUT CANNOT DIVORCE HER WITHOUT LOOSING HIS POSITION IN THE BUSINESS WORLD. THIS IS THE ROOT OF ULCERS AND HEADACHES, OF SURPIRSING SUICIDES, AND WE ALL ARE A PART OF IT. WE CANNOT THINK, DO, OR SAY WHAT WE WANT TO, WHAT WE KNOW IS RIGHT. WE ARE POURED INTO THE MOLD OF THE AVERAGE AMERICAN THE DAY WE ARE BORN AND THERE SEEMS TO BE NO WAY OUT. Writers + Novelists have long realized this problem

A FEW YEARS AGO A BOOK APPEARED TITLED THE ORGANIZATION MAN DESCRIBING THE SITUATION WE HAVE CREATED. IT'S CRUX IS IN POINTING OUT THE COMPLETE LOSS OF THE OLD ETHICS AND VALUES AND THEIR REPLACEMENT BY A NEW ETHIC BASED ON (WHAT THE GUY NEXT DOOR WILL THINK.)

SINCLAIR LEWIS IN HIS MASTERPIECE BABBIT AND F. SCOTT FITZGERLAD IN THE GREAT GATSBY POINTED TO THE SAME PROBLEM.—MEN WHOSE LIVES ARE SO SUPERFICIAL THEY ARE DISGUSTING. MEN WHO HAVE COMPLETELY FORGONE ANY NOTIONS OF WHAT IS RIGHT, OR WHAT IS GOOD, AND WHO HAVE SOLD BODY AND SOUL FOR A MESS OF THE COMPANION'S PORRIDGE.

PROBABLY THE MOST FAMILIAR EXPONENT OF THIS CRITICAL LINE OF THINKING IS ARTHUR MILLER IN HIS PULITZER PRIZE WINNING PLAY DEATH OF A SALESMAN. IN THE PLAY WILLIE LOMAN, A SALESMAN, BECOMES SO INVOLVED WITH BEING A GOOD GUY, THE ONE EVERYBODY SPEAKS TO THAT HE COMPLETELY LOSES TOUCH WITH REALITY. HIS LIFE IS A DREAM HE HAS CREATED AND WHEN REAL LIFE: IN THE FORM OF A SON WHO IS A COMPLETE AND UTTER FAILURE, IMPINGES ON HIS FANTASY HE KILLS HIMSELF.

A WHOLE MOVEMENT HAS SWEPT THE COUNTRY THAT IS CALLED BEATNIK. IT'S PURPOSE ORIGINALLY WAS TO DO AWAY WITH ALL THE SUPERFICIALITIES OF EVERY DAY LIFE, TO LIVE AS ONE WANTS, NOT AS OTHERS EXPECT HIM TOO. (THE IDEA WAS FINE BUT COURSE IT HAS BEN PUSHED TOO FAR EXTREMES NOW.) THE ACTUAL NONCONFORMIST OR SO CALLED BEATNIK IS ONE WHO DOES NOT MAKE SHAVE, (BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO. WHO WEARS SHABBY CLOTHING BECAUSE HE HAS DISREGARDED SOCIEITES CLAIMS ON HIM. HE IS ONE THAT SMILES ONLY WHEN HE IS HAPPY, SAYS "HOW ARE YOU" ONLY WHEN CONCERNED WITH YOUR WELFARE. HIS LIFE IS REAL AND IN EARNEST.

React against dual exists

NOW I CERTAINLY DON'T ADVOCATE THE LIFE OF A BEATNIK FOR ANYONE, BUT WE CAN LEARN SOMETHING FROM THEM. WE CAN LEARN THE VALUE OF BEING REAL AND GENUINE, OF NOT SUPPRESSING THE THINGS WE BELIEVE SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY CLASH WITH PUBLIC OPINION.

THE BEATNIK, THE NOVELISTS I HAVE CITED, AND JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA ALL ISSUE THE SAME CRY, (" BE REAL, BE GENUINE," BE YOURSELF REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOUR NEIGHBOR MIGHT THINK.")

AT THIS POINT YOU MAY BE WONDERING WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH CHRISTIANITY, IT MAY SOUND LIKE I HAVE GOTTEN OFF THE TRACK. BUT I THINK IF YOU WILL JUST PUSH YOUR THOUGHTS A STEP FURTHER YOU WILL SEE THAT THESE NOVELS, THE BEATNIKS AND JOSEPH SPEAK DIRECTLY TO OUR CULTURE AND TO EACH ONE OF US PERSONALLY.

JOSEPH KNEW THE CHRIST AND YET COULD NOT CALL HIM LORD BECAUSE OF HIS SOCIAL SITUATION, THE MEN IN THE NOVELS ALL KNEW IN THEIR HEARTS WHAT WAS GOOD AND RIGHT AND YET COULD NOT LIVE ACCORDING TO THEIR KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT ENDANGERING THEIR PRETIGE. THEY ALL LED TWO LIVES, THE EVERYDAY ONE OF SUPERFICIALITY AND THE REAL ONE OF TRUTH THAT EXISTED IN THEIR HEARTS.

THERE IS NOT ONE PERSON HERE TONIGHT, THER IS NOT ONE PERSON WHOSE NAME IS ON OUR ROLE WHO WOULD NOT READILY ADMIT THAT GOD AND RELIGION ARE IMPORTANT, BESIDE EVERYTHING ELSE THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAW TO BE DEALT WITH. EVEN THE PERSON WHO HAS NO TIME FOR CHURCH, WHO NEVER EVEN ATTENDS A SERVICE WILL AGREE THAT THE CHURCH IS IMPORTANT, SOME* THING EVERYONE SHOULD INVOLVE THEMSELF IN AND SO ON. AND YET IT IS EASY TO SEE THAT IF THIS IS WHAT LIES AT THE BOTTOM OF OUR SOULS, IF WE SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT GOD IS IMPORTANT WE ARE NOT LIVING TRUTHFULLY. ON THE SURFACE IN DAY TO DAY LIVING WE JUST

DON'T HAVE TIME. EVEN WE, WHO MAKE A REGULAR HABIT OF ATTENDING CHURCH, WHO DEVOTE TIME AND TALENTS TO ITS WORK, AT TIMES LIVE THIS DUAL EXISTENCE.

THE QUESTION JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA ASK US IS "YOU CALL YOURSELVES CHRISTIANS, BUT IS THIS THE WAY YOU LIVE, OR DO YOU FIND IT MORE CONVENIENT TO CONFORM TO YOUR FRIENDS TO FORGET THE DYING CHRIST WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH." HE WOULD ASK US IF OUR BELIEFS AFFECT THE WAY WE LIVE AND ACT, OR DO WE REPRESS THEM AND PLAY TO THE CROWD.

IN EVERY HOUR OF EVERY DAY SITUATIONS ARISE THAT FORCE US TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE TWO ALTERNATIVES, BETWEEN TRUTH AND CONFORMITY. WE ARE CONSTANTLY FACED WITH THE CHALLENGE OF PUTTING OUR FAITH TO WORK. THE TEMPTATION IS GREAT, HOWEVER, TO REMAIN SILENT TO DO WHAT THE OTHER GUY IS DOING AND LEAVE IT AT ATHAT. CHRISTIANITY AT WORK BECOMES CONSPICUOUS AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING WE DO NOT WANT IT IS TO BE CONSPICUOUS.

THE CROWD LOOKS DOWN ON SOMEONE WHOSE PERSONAL BELIEFS CONFLICT WITH ITS BEHAVIOR. PEOPLE AT WORK WOULD THINK WE WERE SILLY IF WE BOWED OUR HEAD IN A WORD OF THANKS AT LUNCH TIME. IT IS SO MUCH EASIER AND COMFORTABLE TO LEAVE RELIGION IN THE CHURCH, TO LET it LIE AT THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS WITHOUT DRAGGING IT OUT ALL THE TIME. IT IS SIMPLY EASIER ALL AROUND TO BE A SPLIT PERSAONLITY.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA DID JUST THAT, AND SAW HIMSELF BE A PARTNER TO THE DEATH OF HIS LORD. WE DO WELL TO HEED THE SAD STORY HE TELLS, AND TO STRUGGLE AGAINST ITS OCCURENCE AGAIN AND AGAIN IN OUR OWN LIVES.

HIS IS A CHALLENGE TO BE REAL, TO BE GENUINE, TO CALL JESUS CHRIST LORD AND SAVIOR NOT ONLY HERE IN CHURCH BUT IN EVERY MINUTE OF EVERYDAY.

HE WAS TOO LATE BUT WE DO NOT HAVE TO BE, WE CAN DO IT NOW. HE THREW OFF THE TETHERS OF PRESTIGE AND PUBLIC OPINION AND WALKED RIGHT UP TO PILATE AND CLAIMED HIS LORD. WE TOO MAY DO THE SAME.